

H. Res. 421

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

September 9, 1998.

Whereas on December 29, 1996, the Government of Guatemala and the representatives of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca signed a historic peace accord ending 36 years of armed confrontation;

Whereas the peace accords, which included as the primary goals lasting peace, national reconciliation, and political stability for all Guatemalans, are being successfully implemented;

Whereas the peace accords included the creation of individual commissions to implement a wide range of reforms to the political, social, and judicial systems of Guatemala, including an enhanced respect for human rights and the rule of law;

Whereas, despite the fact that crime and violence remain prevalent in Guatemala, the human rights situation has improved over the last several years, allowing for the creation of special investigative commissions on human rights abuses, the prosecution of those involved in past human rights-related crimes, and the ability of human rights groups to operate with freedom;

Whereas, in recognition that the human rights situation in Guatemala had improved significantly, the United Na-

tions Human Rights Commission voted to remove Guatemala from its list of countries under observation for abuses;

Whereas on Sunday, April 26, 1998, Guatemalan Roman Catholic Bishop Juan Jose Gerardi was brutally and senselessly murdered just 48 hours after presenting a landmark report detailing significant human rights atrocities associated with the 36-year civil war in Guatemala;

Whereas Bishop Gerardi, while considered a common man, dedicated to his ministry, was also considered one of Guatemala's most progressive clergymen, an outspoken human rights advocate, and was the author of the recent report "Guatemala: Never Again", the first comprehensive examination of human rights violations committed during the decades of political violence which engulfed that nation;

Whereas the slaying of Bishop Gerardi casts a pall over the effectiveness of the peace accords and raises questions regarding the national commitment to human rights and freedom of expression; and

Whereas the expeditious and successful resolution of the tragic death of Bishop Gerardi is critical for the continuation of support for the peace accords: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(1) the Government of Guatemala, including the national police and the military, should commit themselves to take all steps necessary to resolve the heinous murder of Guatemalan Roman Catholic Bishop Juan Jose Gerardi;

(2) in order to deter continued human rights abuses, resolve other human rights cases, and improve the citizens' sense of personal security, the Government of Guatemala should continue its efforts to establish effective civilian law enforcement and judicial institutions;

(3) the Government and people of Guatemala should make a renewed commitment to successfully implement the peace accords, especially those accords concerning human rights; and

(4) the United States Government should provide all necessary support to the investigation of the murder of Bishop Gerardi and to continue to support the full implementation of the peace accords.

Attest:

Clerk.